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## THE RELATION OF THE KINDERGARTEN TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

THE point of view of a person is broad, liberal, narrow, or prejudiced, according to the extent of his experience and the attitude of his mind toward new ideas. Perhaps it is well for humanity that conservatism is such an inherent quality of our nature; but it is equally fortunate that an occasional individual should be endowed with the spirit that dares all things that he may promulgate the new truth, or new aspect of an old truth, which he has discovered. The world has need of the conservatism of the many, on the one hand; of the enthusiasm of the individual, on the other.

New ideas, new methods of work, especially where their adoption would affect the community at large, need to be challenged that they may be seen in all the extent of their relation to past, present, and future before such adoption takes place. As we trace through history the great changes in thought, or empire, we realize how slowly the more radical and lasting of them have gained their hold upon mankind. For nearly two thousand years the humanity of the gospels has been conquering brutality, overcoming hatred and malice with brotherly love; nor is the work yet complete. So when we find in the educational world that new ideas, new methods of work, meet with rebuff, that teachers cling to the old and are suspicious of the new, it is only the old story; and it is wise, or helpless childhood might suffer more from experiments than from the clinging to old methods of doing things.

From some quarters the cry is heard that there is too much experimenting in educational work at the present time; that the children are suffering from it. While this may be true to a very small extent in isolated instances, the visitor in almost any primary school of our great country would be impressed with the prevalence of the *old* rather than the *new* in the essentials of the primary-school work. This is treading upon slippery

ground, but so many *mistake the addition of a little busy work for new methods in primary teaching.*

That the primary teacher even today should be a little suspicious of the kindergartner and her methods, should still be inclined to look upon kindergarten work as pure play tending toward riotous disorder, is not surprising. Too often the kindergartner, with the best motives in the world, rebelling against the restraint to child mind and body found in the primary-school room, but utterly ignorant of the actual conditions and problems which confront the primary teacher, has given voice to general principles, or specific rules, which the poor primary teacher, with a definite outline of work assigned for completion within a limited period, has found utterly impracticable of application. So it has come to pass that in some places a spirit of hostility has been engendered between kindergartner and teacher; in others mere tolerance of each other's work exists; while in still others that harmony of work which is believed to be possible is being sought.

Before a harmonious blending can be secured it is necessary to understand the nature of the separate parts which are to constitute the whole. If there is to be continuity in education from the kindergarten to the university, the nature of the work at its various stages, the relation of each to what precedes and to what follows, must be fully known.

For what does the kindergarten stand? "*Development through self-activity.*" A much-abused phrase, but nevertheless one which expresses in the fewest possible words the basis of the kindergarten system of education. To Frederick Froebel does not belong the honor of having discovered the principle involved. It had been seething in the minds of educators for generations. Rousseau and Pestalozzi labored hard to base their work upon it, but the former was led astray by the impracticable; the latter, like many of his successors, was hampered by the requirements of tradition. To Froebel belongs unquestionably the honor of flinging tradition to the winds and successfully placing such material in the hands of teacher and child as makes possible this "development through self-activity."

What is this material? How does it make possible the desired result? To his knowledge of books, nature, and educational principles Froebel added a study of childhood in its untrammelled moments, of motherhood in its unconscious efforts to assist the babe in growth of body and mind, and, after years of thought and experiment, prepared two sets of materials technically known as *gifts* and *occupations*, these to be supplemented by *games*. They form today, as originally, the curriculum of the kindergarten.

However fanciful some may think the derivation of Froebel's *gift* material to be, it nevertheless affords the child an opportunity of acquiring elementary ideas in number (quantitative as well as numerical), geometry, and physics, in the most natural, unconscious way, at the same time that hand, eye, and ear are being trained to accuracy, and the inventive imagination stimulated and given scope for action, for outer expression in tangible material. Should other material better adapted to put the child into possession of these elementary ideas, while developing his powers through use, be presented, it will be cordially welcomed by kindergartners.

The *occupations* present to the child the simple stages of the world's great industries and arts. Rightly used, they open up large opportunities for acquiring useful knowledge, a wholesome love for work, sympathy with the world's workers, as well as technical skill, ingenuity, self-reliance.

Then come the *games*, with their opportunities for social and spiritual development; their cultivation of a community spirit, of self-restraint, of brotherly love, and helpfulness. Time and space allow only the briefest statement of the most characteristic features of each of these occupations which constitute the trilogy of the kindergarten.

The great principle which underlies this system of education, which is the test of all its results, is its ability to arouse and develop through self-activity all the child's latent powers. Many a kindergartner, failing to grasp this truth, fails in securing to her little charges the full benefit which might accrue to them. Imitation and direction, which are necessary, indeed indispen-

sable, are too often allowed to become the most prominent part of the kindergartner's work with the children, thus preventing individual or original expression of thought on the children's part; while, on the other hand, some kindergartners are so lax in the presentation of material that for want of proper direction as to its possibilities both time and material are wasted, while untidy, shiftless habits are inculcated.

*Freedom, not license, direction which tends to awaken and stimulate the child's self-direction*, should be the kindergartner's steadfast aim. Children thus trained will have gained a store of ideas plus a stimulus to fresh acquisitions; some power of expressing thought in material and language; a tendency to observe with accuracy, to infer cause from effect; will have acquired a certain skill of eye and hand, a certain power of attention, some measure of ingenuity, of self-direction, of self-reliance. Quite naturally this means a healthful activity on the part of the children.

Having now some idea of what kindergarten education means, we are ready to consider primary education. Of what does it consist? How does it differ today from that of a generation or so ago? What further changes must it undergo to meet successfully the conditions of today? And, lastly, is it possible to harmonize kindergarten and primary work?

In answer to the first question, "Of what does primary education consist?" the world at large would undoubtedly agree that it consists in the mastery of the "three R's." If we enter a primary class almost anywhere in our land today and remain throughout a session, the impression gained will be that the educational world likewise agrees to the truth of the old saying; nor do educational writings convey any other impression as a rule. I know not whether anyone has as yet asserted that *reading, writing, and arithmetic are not the chief work of the primary school*. Yet there are signs that such a conviction will be reached and acted upon before many years have passed.

It is not necessary to go back more than three generations to reach a time when life was simpler, when children came more directly into contact with nature and with the industries in their simpler forms. Though school life was something entirely sepa-

rate and foreign to the other experiences of their life; though it chiefly called into play memory at the expense of more important mental powers, yet the home life and environment offered so many opportunities for the healthy, natural growth of these other powers of mind and body that children did not suffer so seriously from the narrowing process of routine school work. It was hateful, it was drudgery to them. When conquered, it was looked back upon with complacency, even gratitude, as one of the elements which had helped "make the man." But when *it* conquered, many, many have been the men and women who have thought with a sigh of what "might have been."

But today the conditions of life are wholly unlike those of our grandfathers' time. The environment into which the vast majority of children enter at birth offers but little help to the healthful, natural unfolding of childhood's latent powers. The crowding into those great centers of civilization, the cities, the centralization and specialization of the great industries, the contact with only finished products, deprive children of familiarity with the raw materials, with the processes of their manufacture—formerly for the most part by hand—and the inspiration to imitate or aid their elders thus afforded; they lose, too, that healthful sense of manly power, of self-respect, which springs from the conquest of nature, from the ability to turn the raw products into articles serviceable to mankind; they miss that counter-check to overweening self-importance which a realization of the limit to man's power furnishes through this more direct contact with nature.

It is only the children of the very poorest who are brought into contact with the great industries of today—and then in a way that tends to cramp and dwarf all their powers, to make them mere machines skilful in one little direction, utterly helpless and useless in any other position of life.

In the home life conditions are also changed. The many little duties which the boys in the vast majority of families were expected to perform as their rightful share in easing the burden of family toil, and which afforded the best opportunities, under natural conditions, for the growing powers of the boy to expand,

no longer exist. Modern conveniences in the home economy have freed the boys from all participation in that mutual helpfulness which aids so to strengthen the ties of family love and duty. Where their help is necessary to increase the family income, even where not employed in a factory, industrial conditions are such that it is impossible for the boy to avoid contact with that spirit of competition which so warps mind and soul, so lowers life's ideals, when it enters into the young life. The girls have not yet been so fully released from their share in home duties. Let us hope they may not be, at least until something equally as potent in teaching unselfish efforts in others' behalf be found.

With these changes in environment, which shut out so much of the old that was helpful in the all-around development of children, new conditions, new responsibilities, confronted the teacher. The old routine of school work, which gave no thought to a symmetrical development of all the powers of body, mind, and soul, but sought chiefly through constant drill to secure well-stored minds, was now seen to be totally inadequate. The school must in some way supply, and in more ideal form, conditions which had formerly existed in home and environment, but are now lacking.

It was to meet this strongly-felt need that manual training was introduced into the high school, at the same time that, for this and other reasons, the kindergarten was gradually commending itself to public favor and patronage. But between the kindergarten age and that deemed suitable for manual training lay the years, from six to twelve or fourteen, when the vast majority of children must complete their school work ; years, too, when mind and soul are in their most plastic stage. Must these years, the only available ones for school training for such large numbers of children, be given over to the old routine work ? Must one-half of them be devoted to acquiring a mastery of the mere tools of knowledge ?

Slowly but surely the influence from above and below, from manual training and kindergarten, has been filtering through these intervening years and causing changes for the better, but

there remains much to be done yet, especially in the primary department. The present transitional state of the work bears with far greater strenuousness upon the primary teacher than upon the children. For, while retaining all the old work, she must add to it all the newer elements, often taxing time and ingenuity to the utmost to bring about the desired results.

It is undeniably true that the greater part of the school time from the first through the fourth year is given over to acquiring a degree of fluency in reading, greater or less according to the standard required, to gaining a legible handwriting, some power of expressing thought in writing, and some ability to use figures. I use the word "figures" advisedly, for the "science of number" seems to be something entirely different from the use of figures as ordinarily taught in the primary school. A little six-year-old girl of my acquaintance, who could read numbers into the hundreds as we rode down Broadway in New York city, was given five peanuts one day. She was observed to arrange them in order, count them, then eat the one she had counted last. Asked how many she had left, she replied, "Four." "How many did you eat?" Answer, "Five." "Why!" was the astonished response, "how many did you have at first?" "Five," said the child. "Then, how many have you eaten?" "Five," persisted the child. The numerals stood in that child's mind, as in many another child's, for names, not quantities. Very seldom are children so taught number as to understand the unit value of our notation, of fractions, and of decimals. Some years of experience with hundreds of high-school graduates demonstrated the haziness of the simplest mathematical principles in the average mind. Permit a single illustration:  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 8 and  $8 \div 4$  are regarded by many as identical expressions. How is it with the similar expressions  $\frac{1}{4}$  of  $\frac{1}{8}$  and  $\frac{1}{8} \div \frac{1}{4}$ ? The mathematical language in the expressions  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 8 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of  $\frac{1}{8}$  is certainly the same; as is also that of  $8 \div 4$  and  $\frac{1}{8} \div \frac{1}{4}$ . The trouble is that of letting a *seemingly* identical answer obscure the underlying principle. The first case calls for a definite *part* of a definite quantity; the second for the *measuring* of a definite quantity by another definite quantity. This is but one of the many obscurities that baffle the child-mind.



All this would seem to indicate the need of better teaching, and probably better teaching with fewer children in the class would give far better results than are now obtainable. But the real trouble lies deeper than that and affects, not the arithmetic alone, but the reading and the writing. The great difficulty is that of forcing the *child-mind to grasp new ideas and their expression in new, unknown characters at the same time*. In arithmetic the child-mind is capable of grasping the fundamental principles and applying them with amazing precision in the problems which emerge in connection with work or play, if not confused with figures, a language for which as yet he has found no need. Similarly, before he can use with any degree of accuracy his own eyes, ears, and other senses to gain thought, his own tongue to express it, he is forced to the written or printed page to obtain—what, thought? Oh, no! but repetitious nonsense in which he has no interest except that derived from pleasing his elders by this accomplishment.

Anyone who has taught large numbers of little children of five and six years of age to read; who has watched the earnest, intent little faces; seen the struggle to understand; seen the baffled, defeated look so often creep into the bright eyes—has realized the need for care lest defeat be followed by despair. Children of even average ability can undoubtedly be taught to read with considerable fluency between the ages of five and seven. But though the best devices known in teaching today are used, it is accomplished by means of constant repetition. The devices relieve the monotony, but the process nevertheless is repetition, memory. It cannot be otherwise with such young children, and it must necessarily consume the greater part of the time allotted to school work.

So far as primary education is concerned, the chief difference between the *new education of today and that of a generation or so ago lies in the use of devices to mitigate the rigor and monotony of the work*. The idea of interest, of variety in unity, as factors in securing the child's co-operation, has modified the way of presenting facts or truths to the young mind; the need of hand-work, to relieve both mind and body, has changed the routine

of work; the introduction of stories and nature study offers food for the imagination, opportunity for the training of sense-perception, of observation.

But with the vast majority of teachers these are even yet perfunctory details, adjuncts to their daily work, oftentimes grudgingly attended to because of the time they consume. Judging from the outlines of primary work usually furnished to teachers, it would seem that many supervisors attach but little value to them also. Thoughtful educators and teachers are coming slowly but surely to give to the handwork, the stories, the games, and the nature work the value rightfully due them; for they alone afford opportunity for the development of powers which make for character, fit for life. And the other work which formerly usurped all the time seems somehow to be acquired with greater ease in less time. "So the last shall be first, and the first last," is as true of the importance to be attached to the several phases of primary-school work as of judgment in the essentials which constitute character.

When that which was introduced to mitigate what was regarded as the legitimate work of the primary school usurps the place of that work and becomes *the* work; when, in other words, reading, writing, and figuring are relegated to their proper place, becoming the incidentals of primary work, then we shall, indeed, have in the primary school the *new education*.

When manual training was introduced into the high school it was feared that the purely intellectual work would suffer. It remained for experiment to prove the contrary, which it did. Educators have always feared lest the age when memory is easily retentive be passed before children acquire a mastery of those necessary tools, the "three R's," which open the gateway into real knowledge, so they have erred in burdening the child with them before he was ready to receive or use them. This, too, at a time which might better have been spent in introducing to him, through stories told, the great thoughts and ideals which folk and fairy lore, literature, and history hold for him, when, in connection with handwork, problems in measuring, weighing, computing, which would be real tests of mental power,

should be solved; when habits of observation, inference, generalization, self-direction, self-reliance—in short, all the aptitudes which make the future student possible—should be forming. The *new education*, when it is fully come, will bear in mind the necessity of mastering the written characters of knowledge, but will *first provide thoughts to express, then the means of expressing them.*

When the great principle of the kindergarten, “development through self-activity,” has become the watchword of the primary school likewise, the children in passing from one to the other will not experience that strange change in atmosphere and work which leads the more active of them to use their aroused but unemployed powers in the invention of mischief, and which leaves the duller of them, whose glimmer of light has been snuffed out, to grope in denser darkness. The teacher of the primary class will no longer wonder what she is to do with those active, restless little kindergarten children, for she will be able to direct and employ to the full the alert powers of mind and body awaiting her guidance.

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